

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Vayigash



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Torah Wellsprings - Vayigash

Never Lose Hope

In last week's *parashah*, Yehudah told Yaakov, וחטאתי לך כל הימים, "I'll have sinned before you forever" (43:9). He said this regarding if he fails to bring Binyomin back home. Forever means eternity in this world and the next world (see *Rashi* and *Baal HaTurim*).

When the ruler of Mitzrayim (Yosef) said Binyamin must stay on as a slave, Yehudah realized that his entire future – this world and the next world – was at stake. But he didn't lose hope. ויגש אליו יהודה, Yehudah courageously pleaded with the Egyptian ruler and did whatever he could to save Binyamin.

We must learn from Yehudah never to lose hope no matter how bleak the situation and to have *bitachon* that everything will work out well.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 10.) teaches that Chizkiyahu HaMelech perceived with his *ruach hakadosh* that he would have bad children (בני דלא מעלי) so he didn't keep the mitzvah of bearing children. Yeshayah [ben Amotz] HaNavi came to Chizkiyahu and told him, "So says Hashem, say your last wishes to your family, כי מת אתה ולא תחיה, for you will die, and you will not live."

Chizkiyahu said, "Give me your daughter in marriage. Perhaps our combined merits will grant us good children."

Yeshayah HaNavi replied, "It's too late. The decree of your demise has already been sealed."

Chizkiyahu refused to hear that because it is never too late for a Yid. He told Yeshayah, "Son of Amotz, finish your *nevuah* and leave. I received [a tradition] from my father's father's house: 'Even when a sharp sword is on one's neck, one shouldn't lose hope...' He learned from his grandfather that there's always hope. Chizkiyahu had many righteous grandfathers, including Dovid HaMelech, Shlomo HaMelech, and more, but the Gemara doesn't state which grandfather taught him this lesson.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says he learned it from his grandfather, Yehudah. Yehudah was at the point of losing his Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa, but he didn't lose hope. Chizkiyahu was in a similar predicament. The *navi* told him that he would die in this world and not live in the next world because he didn't bear children, but he didn't lose hope. He learned from Yehudah that there's always hope.¹

1. After World War II, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky *zt'l* expressed his despair over what happened to the Jewish nation in the Holocaust to the Chazon Ish *zt'l*. The Chazon Ish told him we aren't permitted to lose hope and wallow in misery. We must build on top of those ashes. The Chazon Ish told him the following story:

A businessman in Kovna would borrow money, buy merchandise at the fair, and sell it for a profit. With the money he earned, he would pay off his debts and live off the profits. When all the merchandise was sold, he would repeat the process.

Once, he was ill, so he asked his wife to run the business for him. She knew exactly what to do. She borrowed money and traveled to the fair, but unfortunately, she lost the money somewhere near the fair.

Distressed, she went from booth to booth, asking the merchants and customers whether they found her money. Eventually, someone admitted that he had found the money, "However," he said, "I'm not returning it. I'm not wealthy; I need the money, and I'm not obligated to return it! In a place where most merchants are *goyim*, we have permission to assume that the owner of the money gave up on ever seeing the money

them sit according to their age, and they were astonished.

Rashi writes, "Yosef hit his goblet and called: 'Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissaschar, and Zevulun are the children of the same mother. They should sit in this order, the order they were born.' Yosef did this for all the brothers. When he came to Binyamin, he said, 'He doesn't have a mother, and I don't have a mother,' so Binyamin sat next to him." He knew their ages, he knew their names, he knew about their family, and yet, they didn't suspect that maybe he was Yosef.

It is shocking. As the Midrash says, "Everyone is like the blind until Hakadosh Baruch Hu opens their eyes." It wasn't time for them to know, so they didn't know.

They so much wanted to find Yosef. The Midrash says that a moment after they sold Yosef, they regretted what they did and were prepared to redeem him for all the money in the world. When they came to Mitzrayim, they entered through ten entrances, hoping that perhaps one of them would find Yosef. Finding him was constantly on their conscience, and they even had the clues to suspect that the leader of Mitzrayim was Yosef, but it didn't cross their mind because it wasn't bashert. The time wasn't right. When the time for them to know arrived, Yosef showed them that he had milah, and they knew for sure that this was Yosef. If Yosef had shown them yesterday or an hour before, they still wouldn't recognize him. But when the time came, everything made sense to them.

This is a reminder that we should never lose hope. Chazal (Pesachim 52) states, "There are seven things that are concealed from people..." and one of them is *יום הנחמה*, the day that his distress and problems will be resolved. We don't have to lose hope. When the destined day comes, everything will be resolved.

It states in this week's *parashah*, ויצא האחד מאתי ואומר טרף טרף (44:28). Reb Moshe'le Baal

Teshuvah *zt'l* explained, ויצא האחד מאתי, when I forget the One Hashem, then I say, טרף טרף, that there's no hope. But when I remember Hashem, I know that there's always hope.

It states (Bereishis 44:28) ויצא האחד מאתי ואומר אך טרף טרף. Maharitz Dushinsky *zt'l* explains, ויצא האחד מאתי, when I forget the אחד, Hashem, when I forget that everything is from Hashem, אך טרף טרף, I became מטורף, confused and worried.

Reb Yosef Shwartz was in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. He tried to appear healthy at the "Selections" so he would be sent to the right, but he was sent to the left. This problem saved his life. The Americans were approaching, and to conceal their atrocities, the Nazis sent all people who were sent to the right on a death march. Most of them died. The people sent to the left survived because the Americans arrived before they could assassinate them.

So, when something seems bad, one can discover afterwards that it was the best for him. And even when we don't see it, we believe it is so. And there is never a reason to lose hope.

Benefits of Suffering

It states (45:1) ולא יכל יוסף להתאפק לכל הנצבים עליו, "Yosef couldn't restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him..."

The Sfas Emes notes that it seems that Yosef wanted to conceal his identity from his brothers a little longer, but he simply couldn't contain himself anymore. But if he could contain himself a drop longer, he would do so. It would be better for the future of Klal Yisrael, and there wouldn't be a churban Beis HaMikdash.

After revealing himself, Yosef cried on Binyamin's shoulders for the two Batei Mikdash that would be built on Binyamin's portion and would be destroyed, and Binyamin cried on Yosef's shoulder for Mishkan Shilo that would be built on Yosef's portion and would be destroyed (see Rashi

45:14). Yosef and Binyamin met after years of separation. We would expect a more joyous get-together. Why was it that the first thing they did was cry?

But this is because the root of the churban happened just then. Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers early, and if it weren't for this, the churbanos wouldn't have occurred. The root of the churbanos just occurred, and therefore, they cried at this time.

This is a reminder that every difficulty has a purpose. Every tzaar and hardship saves us from much greater troubles. The brothers were in tzaar as they stood before Yosef, and Yosef claimed that he would imprison Binyamin. This tzaar saved Klal Yisrael from a lot of tzaros. If Yosef could conceal himself a drop longer, it would have been so good for them and Klal Yisrael.

This reminds us that every tzaar has a purpose, and even if presently we don't understand how and why it is good, one day we will look back and understand.

Yaakov began his trip to Mitzrayim. It states (46:1) ויסע ישראל וכל אשר לו ויבא בארה שבע ויזבח "Yisrael set out with all that he had, and he came to Beer-Sheva where he sacrificed korbanos to the G-d of his father, Yitzchak." Rashi and the Ramban address why specifically Yitzchak is mentioned in this pasuk. The pasuk could have stated, "He sacrificed korbanos to the G-d of his fathers," and both Avraham and Yitzchak would be included.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim writes, "It is known that Yitzchak represents the attribute of din, of strict justice. It was time to praise Hashem for the din he exercised because it was all for the good. Hakadosh Baruch Hu did only good for him."

Yaakov suffered immensely when he lost Yosef, but now he realized that it was all in

his favor so he could be supported during the hunger years. Chazal say, that if it weren't for Yosef, Yaakov would be brought down to Mitzrayim in chains, like a slave. Yosef's stay in Mitzrayim enabled Yaakov to come to Mitzrayim in honor. Therefore, Yaakov praised Hashem, לאלקי אביו יצחק, the G-d of Yitzchak. He realized that the din and hardships were also for his good.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim writes that this is also the meaning of the pasuk (Tehillim 118:21) אוֹדֶה כִּי עֲנִיתָנִי וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה "I thank You for You have afflicted me and became my salvation." He thanked Hashem for the afflictions because from them came his salvation.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim writes that there are different types of yesurim.

One form of yesurim is to increase reward in Olam HaBa. "It is certain that all yesurim in this world are very worthwhile when it results in a moment of experiencing the rays of the Shechinah in Olam Haba."

Another form of yesurim is to remove aveiros so that he won't need the punishments of Gehinom. "One moment in *gehinom* is certainly worse than all yesurim in this world... One thousand yesurim in this world is better than the punishment of *gehinom*."

Another benefit to *yesurim* is that they remind a person to do teshuvah.

"Sometimes, Hashem decrees to give goodness to a person, and the goodness comes down first in a negative form. The person thinks it is bad for him, but as time passes, he will see that it was a great favor for him. This happens sometimes..."

This is what happened to Yaakov and Yosef. It appeared that it was for the bad, but they eventually saw how it was all for their good.²

2. The Ramban had a young student who was niftar young. The Ramban wrote a *kameia*, put it in his student's hand, and had him buried with it. The Ramban said, "When you go up to heaven, find the

chamber called כסאות למשפט, Thrones of Justice. In that chamber, ask why you had to die so young, and also ask why the Jewish nation in this generation suffers so many tzaros."

Sometime later, the Ramban was learning Torah near the window. The window opened, and he saw his student as though he were alive. The student said, "With your *kameia* in my hand, I went from chamber to chamber, and none of the *malachim* stopped me. I reached the chamber called כסאות למשפט. But I didn't ask the questions you told me to ask because Hashem's kindness is evident in that chamber. Even matters that seem bad here are all solely for the good. So I had nothing to ask..."

When the brothers, the שבטי י"ה, were in Mitzrayim, they couldn't understand why the ruler of Mitzrayim picked on them. He accused them of espionage, theft, etc. But when Yosef said אני יוסף, "I am Yosef," all their questions vanished. Suddenly, everything made sense. The Chofetz Chaim ז"ל added that many things are happening in the world that don't seem to make sense, but when Hashem will announce, אני ה', "I am Hashem...", all questions will be answered.

Rebbe Moshe of Korbin ז"ל said, א"ל אדון על כל המעשים, that 'Hashem is the leader of the world,' is the answer to all questions.

Reb Shmuel Rozovsky ז"ל was one of the *roshei yeshiva* of Yeshivas Ponevitzh. His father, Reb Michal Dovid ז"ל was the Rav of Grodna. When Reb Michal Dovid was *niftar* (year תרצ"ה) he left two sons: Reb Shmuel and Reb Yehoshua Heshel. Both were fitting to be their father's successors, as Rav of Grodna.

A debate broke out between the Rozovsky family and the residents of Grodna regarding which son should take over their father. The Rozovsky family wanted Reb Yehoshua Heshel for rav since he was the older brother. The people of Grodna, however, wanted Reb Shmuel because he was a greater *talmid chacham*, and they considered him more fitting for the position. They decided to ask Reb Chaim Ozer ז"ל.

The appointment with Reb Chaim Ozer was scheduled for ten in the morning. Reb Shmuel Rozovsky arrived at eight a.m. and told Reb Chaim Ozer, "There is nothing to discuss. I've decided not to be the rav since I have an older brother."

Two hours later, the delegation arrived at Reb Chaim Ozer's home. They discussed the issue, and Reb Chaim Ozer ruled in favor of Reb Yehoshua Heshel.

A year passed, and the city was still not at peace with their choice. Reb Shmuel realized that as long as he lived in Grodna, his personality would cast a shadow over his older brother. Although his older brother was fitting for the position, the city wouldn't fully accept him as long as Reb Shmuel lived there.

Reb Shmuel made a *gorel HaGra* (using a *Chumash*, to know what to do and where he should go). The *gorel* fell on the *pasuk* (Bereishis 12:1) ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך ומולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך, "Hashem said to Avram, leave your land, your birthplace, your father's home, to go to the land that I will show you." Reb Shmuel understood that this was telling him to move to Eretz Yisrael.

He came to Eretz Yisrael without family, but he felt that I was a worthwhile sacrifice for his brother's sake.

Some years later, the war broke out. The *resha'im* killed the entire city of Grodna *al kiddush Hashem*, including Reb Yehoshua Heshel.

Reb Shmuel Rozovsky was the sole survivor of his entire family.

This story teaches us (a) you never lose from being *mevater*. Reb Shmuel was *mevater* being the rav, and that saved his life. (b) Even when things seem bad, it's all good. In Grodna, Reb Shmuel was appreciated and sought after; in Eretz Yisrael, he was a stranger. But that move and those hardships saved his life. All the Torah that he taught and continues to teach through his sefarim and students is the product of those initial difficult years in Eretz Yisrael.

A somewhat similar story happened to Reb Binyamin Zev Deitsch, the principal (בנהל) of Yeshivas Ponevitzh. As a *bachur*, he lived in Hungary, and he and another forty-nine *bachurim* were summoned to sign up for the Hungarian army. Their parents put together a large sum of money to bribe a doctor to "find" illnesses in the fifty *bachurim* so they wouldn't be conscripted into the army. Reb Binyamin Zev's parents and the parents of one other *bachur* contributed the lions-share of the funds because they were wealthy and could afford it.

It states (46:3-4) אל תירא מרדה מצרימה... אנכי ארד "Do not be afraid of going down to Mitzrayim... I will go down with you to Mitzrayim, and I will bring you up, and even up." The Sfas Emes (5632) zt'l explains that the double expression גם אעלך גם עלה, "I will bring you up, and even up," hinted to Yaakov that due to his going down to Mitzrayim, he will reach a higher level than ever before. This is the way of the world, ירידה לצורך עליה, descents result in ascending even higher than before. A lot of good comes from the descents."³

The Torah (45:27) tells us that when Yaakov saw the עגלות, the wagons that Yosef sent to bring him to Mitzrayim, ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם, "Yaakov's spirit was revived."

The Kedushas Levi writes, "Yosef hinted to Yaakov that he shouldn't worry about going into galus because the galus will bring about redemption." עגלות, wagons, can also be translated as "circle." The Kedushas Levi explains that Hashem leads us with a straight line, אור ישר, and Hashem also leads us with עגולים, circular routes that represent the ways that bring about Hashem's chesed. They aren't the intended chesed, but they are the means and avenue through which Hashem sends His bounty to us. Yaakov understood that the galus in Mitzrayim would result in the greatest chesed.

(46:2) ויאמר אלקים לישראל במראת הלילה "Hashem said to Yisrael in night visions..." We can find a hint to our topic in these words. לילה, nighttime, represents hardships. מראות הלילה tells us that it appears like night, it seems like bad times, but it is never actually so. It is a vision, an imagination, and not reality. Everything is always bright and good.

The same idea can be said on the pasuk (Tehillim 94:18) אם אמרתי מטה רגלי חסדך ה' יסעדני "If I said, 'My foot falters,' Your kindness,

Hashem, supported me." It is only אמרתי מטה רגלי, I say that my feet falter, but it isn't ever the reality. It is how it appears to me, but not how it is.

It also states (Tehillim 90:15) שמחנו כימות עניתנו שנות ראינו רעה, "Gladden us according to the days You afflicted us, the years when we saw bad."

Rebbe Hershele Spinka zt'l asks two questions:

1) How does one see bad? Isn't bad something that one experiences?

2) The opposite of afflictions isn't joy. The opposite of afflictions is Hashem's kindness. So, why does it state שמחנו כימות עניתנו שנות ראינו רעה, "Gladden us according to the days You afflicted us"? It should say "Do kindness with us as the days that You afflicted us."

But everything is for the good. It appeared bad to us; we were sad, but everything was good. Therefore, we say, שנות ראינו רעה, "the years we saw bad." We saw bad, but it wasn't bad. And we request, שמחנו כימות עניתנו, "Gladden us according to the days You afflicted us." We ask for joy; we don't ask for chesed because chesed was always there. The affliction was also chesed. We request that Hashem give us another kind of chesed that we will accept with joy.

Praising Hashem is a Segulah for Yeshuos

Regarding honoring Hashem, it states (Tehillim 50:23) יכבדני "he Honors Me," and the Sfas Emes says that the two נו"ן in this word means to honor and to praise Hashem also for the good and also for the bad, because everything is for the good. The pasuk ends and states, אראנו בישע אלקים, "I will show him Hashem's salvation." This tells us that praising Hashem for the good and the opposite is mesugal for yeshuos. When one

3. The Sfas Emes (Vayeitzei, 5637) teaches the same lesson regarding the yetzer hara. "When a person merits to improve himself and to overpower the yetzer hara, afterwards, he will see that due to the yetzer hara, he is now at a higher place. This is why Hashem says about the yetzer hara טוב מאד, that it is very good."

praises Hashem with the awareness that everything will be good, he will merit seeing the salvation that will come from it.

This is also alluded to in the words (Tehillim 118:2) "יאמר נא ישראל כי לעולם חסדו", "Let Yisrael say now, for His kindness endures forever." Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l explains that if Bnei Yisrael will say that it is good, they will merit seeing it so.

Growth from Tests

It states (45:28) "יאמר ישראל רב עוד יוסף בני חי אלכה", "My son Yosef is alive. I will go and see him before I die."

The statement is unusual. Yaakov could have simply said, "I will go and see him."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l explains that Yaakov was saying that he can see Yosef in this world, but he won't be able to see Yosef in Olam HaBa because Yosef passed very difficult tests, so he reached very high levels. He was sold to Mitzrayim, the only Yid among so many goyim. He was tested with *aishes* Potiphar and with twelve years in jail, and so on. A person's position in Gan Eden will be according to the tests he passed through in this world. Yaakov said, "I want to see him before I die because I won't be able to see Yosef in the next world. He will be on a level that is far greater than the one I am on."

The Chofetz Chaim said this vort on *Motzei* Yom Kippur to young men who came to his beis medresh to daven. It was during the First World War, and these young men would be drafted into the army. The Chofetz Chaim told them, "I am glad I can see you on Yom Kippur because in the next world, I won't be able to see you. Because of the tests you will go through, you will reach very high levels and be in an exalted place in Gan Eden."

Beis Avraham said that the most precious stones, those that will be placed in the king's crown, are taken out of the lowest places in

the earth. This indicates that from difficult tests, we create stones that will go into Hashem's crown. The greatest levels are accomplished from difficult tests.

Before Yaakov went down to Mitzrayim, Hashem appeared to Yaakov in a vision at night, and he called to Yaakov, saying his name twice, as it states (46:2) "ויאמר אלקים לישראל במראת הלילה ויאמר יעקב יעקב ויאמר הנני."

Rashi writes, "לשון חבה", that the double expression "יעקב יעקב" demonstrates love. One can ask, the name "יעקב" represents Yaakov when he was on a lower level and the name "ישראל" is used when he was at a higher level. Wouldn't it make more sense to express the "לשון חבה", the expression of love, when the name Yisrael is used?

But the answer is, as we explained, the greatest love from Hashem comes from the difficult tests that He puts us in and that we struggle with.

We will explain this with a *mashal*: A soldier saved the king's life. This occurred during a war, when there was a moment when the king was alone, and this soldier courageously saved the king's life. The soldier was wounded in the battle; his shirt was covered with blood, but he survived, and he saved the king's life.

The king rewarded him with a shirt made of gold. The blood-stained shirt was placed in the king's treasury. When the king saw the soldier with the gold shirt, he remembered what he had done for him, filling his heart with gratitude. But when the king went to the treasury and saw the shirt stained with blood, his gratitude was so much greater, and his love for the soldier increased.

This is why Hashem's love for Yaakov is specifically expressed with the name Yaakov rather than Yisrael. It is from the struggles in *avodas Hashem* that Hashem's love is strongest towards us.

It states (45:3) "ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו אני יוסף העוד אבי", "Yosef said to his brothers, 'I am Yosef. Is my father still

alive?' But his brothers could not answer him because they were left disconcerted before him."

Rashi explains, "He saw them walking back, and Yosef said, 'Now my brothers are embarrassed.' He called to them with kind, comforting words."

What did Yosef tell them? The next pasuk states, *ויאמר אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אתי מצרימה*, "I am Yosef your brother. It is me, whom you sold to Mitzrayim."

The Sfas Emes (5636) asks that now he was embarrassing them even more! He reminded them of their aveirah, that they sold him to Mitzrayim!

The Sfas Emes explains that Yosef was telling them he reached his high levels only because they sold him. Yosef explained that he wasn't angry at them because they actually helped him become who he was.

We quote:

"The *shevatim* perceived Yosef's great kedushah. This is the meaning of *כי נבהלו מפניו*; they were embarrassed from his face, which shone with holiness. Yosef told them that he reached this level because they sold him to Mitzrayim. They helped him attain his *tzidkus*. This calmed them. They thought that if he would remain with his father, he would become an even greater *tzaddik*, but it wasn't so." It was specifically due to Yosef's struggles and challenges that he reached such high levels.

It was Shabbos when Yosef revealed himself. The Chasam Sofer proves this from the pasuk (43:16) *ויאמר לאשר על ביתו הבא את האנשים והבן הביתה וטבח טבח והבן*, which Chazal derive that it was on Shabbos. On this day, Yosef cried on Binyamin's shoulders, and Binyamin cried on his shoulder. Rashi explains that they cried over the churban. But why did they cry on Shabbos?

The answer is they were crying from joy, which is permitted on Shabbos. The Chasam Sofer explains that they saw the churbanos,

the destructions of the Batei Mikdash and Mishkan Shilo. They saw difficult times for Bnei Yisrael, and together with that, they saw that the Jewish nation would continue serving Hashem, and this filled the hearts of Yosef and Binyamin with awareness of the greatness of Bnei Yisrael.

The Ultimate Rebuke

The *passuk* (45:3) says, *אני יוסף העוד אבי חי ולא*, "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" The brothers couldn't answer because they were frightened before him."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 4) teaches, "Reb Elazar would cry when he came to this *pasuk* Reb Elazar said, 'If the rebuke of a human being causes so much shame, how frightening will it be when Hakadosh Baruch Hu's rebukes us...!'"

The commentaries ask: What was Yosef's rebuke? The Torah doesn't say that Yosef rebuked them. It only states that he told them that he was Yosef.

The Ksav Sofer, the Sfas Emes, and several other *meforshim* give the same answer. They explain that Yosef's rebuke was *אני יוסף העוד אבי חי*. We will explain:

Yosef said he wanted to arrest Binyamin because the golden goblet was found in his bag. Yehudah pleaded with Yosef to spare Binyamin. His point was, "Even if Binyamin is guilty, why should our father suffer? Why is he guilty? He will die from grief. Spare Binyamin for our father's sake."

Yosef replied, *אני יוסף העוד אבי חי*, "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" He was saying, "You're telling me to be compassionate for our father's sake, but did you consider our father's distress when you sold me to Mitzrayim? Why do you only think about your father now? Why didn't you care about your father then?"

This *tochachah* is very powerful because it shows the discrepancy of one's own actions. There is nothing one can answer to pardon

himself after being shown that his deeds contradict his own words and outlook.

The Gemara says that this form of rebuke will also take place in the future, and how devastating and frightening it will be!

We will give some examples:

After one's demise, when heaven asks a person why he didn't give tzedakah, he might reply, "I couldn't. I needed the money for my own family." Heaven will reply, "But we saw that you had enough money to go on vacation to a distant country every year. You paid for the airfare, the five-star hotels, and the attractions. You didn't think about not having enough money then. Why do you only consider your tight budget when a poor person comes to you?"

Similarly, the heavenly court will ask, "There were people who wanted to speak to you; they needed your advice and your attention, but you never had time for them." He will answer, "I was so busy. I had to get to work on time, go to a *shiur*, spend some time with the family, catch a minyan, etc. I simply didn't find time to speak with the lonely people who sought my attention." But then heaven will show him that he had plenty of time to read the newspaper, converse with friends, and be involved in unimportant endeavors.

This *tochachah* leaves a person speechless because it proves he didn't care enough.

Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef, is our father still alive?" The brothers weren't

able to answer him, *כי נבהלו מפניו*, because they were frightened before him."

Peace in Family

The Maharal translates the words, *כי נבהלו מפניו*, literally: "They were frightened by his face." Because if the *pasuk* means that they were afraid of *him*, it would say, *כי נבהלו מומו*, "They were frightened from him."

The Maharal explains that they saw Yosef in a different light, as though he had a brand-new face that they never saw before, and this frightened them.

At first, the brothers viewed Yosef as a murderer, a *rodef*, someone who desires to harm them. This is the reason they believed they had permission to kill him or to sell him to Mitzrayim. But now they saw that they had erred. They saw a new Yosef, a new face. Yosef didn't want to kill them. If he did, he could have done so several times since he was the ruler of Mitzrayim, and they were at his mercy. The brothers realized they were mistaken, and that's why they were so frightened. They were frightened by the magnitude of their error and how severely they had sinned.

There are times when we think someone is against us, someone is cruel to us, etc. but it is possible that we aren't seeing things correctly. Practice seeing this "new face" in the people around you, and then you will be friendly and at peace with everyone.⁴

4. Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l told the following story. He heard it from Reb Zalman Chaim Rivlin zt'l, who heard it from Reb Nachum of Shadik zt'l.

Once, an egg merchant came to the rav of his city, covered from head to toe in eggs and egg shells. He told the rav what happened. "Like I do every day, I bought a basket of eggs in a nearby village and brought them to sell in town. A customer asked me to deliver eggs to his home. I said that I first needed payment. He became angry and hit my basket with his stick. All the eggs broke, and I became dirtied with egg yolks. I want him summoned for a *din Torah*!"

The rav sent his *shamesh* to summon that person for a *din Torah*. The *shamesh* was afraid because this person was renowned in the city as a *moser* — someone who slandered the Jewish community to the local government — and everyone in the town was afraid of him. But the rav told him not to be scared and to do his mission.

The Or HaChaim (45:4) writes that Yosef said to his brothers, "This that you are afraid of me, don't worry, אני יוסף אהיכם, I am with you in brotherhood, as if nothing occurred."

The *shamesh* went to the *moser's* home and told him, "The rav summons you to a *din Torah*."

The *moser* ridiculed the *shamesh* and refused to go. The *shamesh* relayed the *moser's* insolent response.

The rav said, "Go to his home and summon him again. This time, warn him that he will be placed in *niduy*, ex-communication if he doesn't come."

This time, the *moser* slapped the *shamesh* and repeated that he would not come to court.

That Shabbos, the *moser* was called up for an *aliyah*. The rav quickly rushed to the *bimah*, and in front of everyone, he said, "*Rasha!* You are in *niduy* because you didn't come to *beis din*. You may not receive an *aliyah*."

The *moser* stepped down, ashamed. Under his breath, but loud enough so people could hear, the *moser* said, "I will take revenge on the rav."

A few days later, the rav traveled to a neighboring village to be *sandek* at a bris. His student, Reb Nachum Shadik, and others were with him. From a distance, the students saw the *moser*. "We are in great danger," they told the rav. "The *moser* is chasing us, and he will soon catch up."

The rav became deep in thought. Soon, the *moser* arrived, and in a surprisingly humble voice, he said to the rav, "I want to hit your *talmidim*. Please, let me hit them."

"No!" the rav reprimanded. "You may not touch them."

"Then let me spit on them?"

"Also, not."

"Forgive me for all the trouble I caused you."

"If you will receive the egg merchant's forgiveness and pay for the eggs you broke, I will also forgive you."

The *moser* gave the rav ten rubles and said, "Give it to the egg merchant. It will cover the cost of the eggs. And the extra money is to appease him, so he should forgive me."

The rav took the money and said, "I will give over the money. I am certain that he will forgive you. And I also forgive you." They parted on friendly terms.

The students were shocked by the *moser's* humble demeanor. Reb Nachum Shadik asked the rav how it happened. "How did the *moser* change his nature so quickly? He was rushing to harm us. How did he suddenly become so gentle?"

The rav replied, "My rebbes taught me that the solution to every problem could be found in the Torah. As the *moser* was pursuing after us, I thought of the *pasuk*, כמים הפנים לפנים כן לב האדם לאדם. This *pasuk* teaches that people are like mirrors. If you love your fellow man, you can be certain he loves you too. If you hate someone, this is a sign that he hates you. I realized that if the *moser* hates me, it must be that I hate him as well, and if I love him, he will love me back. I began searching for his qualities and finding ways to judge him favorably. I thought about how he was probably raised without *chinuch* and doesn't know how to act properly. I thought such thoughts until I loved him. This automatically spurred him to think positively towards me, and he didn't want to hurt me anymore."

Reb Nachum asked, "Why did he want to hit and spit on us?"

"He hated you because you still hated him. Had you loved him, he would feel positive towards you as well."

Then Yosef said, אַחִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר מָכַרְתֶּם, "Even when you sold me, my feelings of brotherhood with you never left me."

Tzaddikim say that the Or HaChaim wouldn't have written this explanation if he, himself, wasn't on this level. And it is an incredibly high level. Yosef suffered immensely from being sold to Mitzrayim. He was in jail for twelve years, he suffered from *aishes* Potiphar, and more. But throughout all these times, Yosef said that his feeling of love to his brothers remained firm. Even when they sold him, he wasn't angry at them, and that is an incredibly high level.

We can't expect to have this perfection, but at least we should aim at being somewhat like Yosef. As Chazal say, חַיִּיב אָדָם לומר מתי יגיעו, a person should say, "When will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers." The word יגיעו means to reach, but it also means to touch. The Imrei Emes says that we must at least touch and have a drop of similarity to the deeds of our forefathers. We should seek to be like Yosef HaTzaddik.

It is wrong to argue and fight, especially with family. Hard feelings toward family shouldn't be expressed, no matter what the others did to us.

The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "See how much a person must forgive because they sinned to him, and he cried on their shoulders."⁵

The Psikta writes that Yosef was cautious to never be alone with Yaakov, because he

sought to avoid Yaakov asking him how he ended up in Mitzrayim, and he would have to tell him about how the brothers sold him.

Also, the Ramban writes that Yosef never told Yaakov about his being sold. This is how cautious they were about harming others in their family. Yosef didn't want his brothers to be embarrassed and harmed, and he protected his brothers from shame.

The Shem MiShmuel zt'l mentions that had Yosef come frequently to his father, Yaakov, how much Torah he would have learned! How many secrets of the Torah would have been discussed! But Yosef forfeited this opportunity, for his brother's sake, for he was cautious that they shouldn't suffer any shame.

Yaakov Avinu said (44:28) אַךְ טַרְף טַרְף, The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that טַרְף means *parnassah* (see Tehillim 111:5, טַרְף נָתַן לִירֵאָיו). The expression אַךְ טַרְף טַרְף means that the *parnassah* was lost, due to the *machlokes*. This is as the Shlah HaKadosh teaches, "One *machlokes* pushes away one hundred *parnasos*."

One of the tzaddikim of the Gerer dynasty was Reb Moshe Betzalel. There was once poverty in his home, and he said that the first step towards fixing this problem was to avoid *machlokes* and disputes, because "one dispute pushes away one hundred *parnasos*."

Yosef told his brothers (45:24) אַל תִּרְגְּזוּ בְדֶרֶךְ, and Reb Chatzkel Kozmirer zt'l explains, "Don't argue over the *derech*, the correct path in which to serve Hashem." The *yetzer hara* finds many ways to increase *machlokes* among Yidden, and one of the *yetzer hara's*

5. Someone went to Meron for Shabbos. He arrived three hours before sunset and found that the apartment he rented was far from suitable. It wasn't cleaned properly, nor orderly. He looked for another place to be for Shabbos but couldn't find one, so he settled on what he had but decided that he wouldn't pay the rent. "He cheated me," he said, "and doesn't deserve to be paid."

After Shabbos, his older daughter said, "Please, father. Forgive him and pay him. And in the merit of your avoiding a *machlokes*, may Hashem help me find my *shidduch*."

The father agreed to do as his daughter requested. She had been waiting for many years for her *shidduch*, and shortly after this episode, she got engaged.

tactics is to cause people to fight and argue over the correct path in serving Hashem. Yosef warned his brothers that they shouldn't fall into that trap.

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zt'l said, "Hashem shows each tzaddik that his path is the correct path to serve Hashem. Hashem shows this to the tzaddik to strengthen him in his way. However, the tzaddik doesn't realize that just as Hashem revealed this to him, Hashem reveals the same to other tzaddikim. Hashem tells them that their path in avodas Hashem is the correct way.

It states (Yeshayah 66:22) *כי כאשר השמים החדשים והארץ החדשה אשר אני עושה*, that in the future, Hashem will create a new heaven and a new earth. We understand that we need a new earth because the earth became contaminated by our aveiros, but why do we need a new heaven?

The Chasam Sofer said that this is because people make machlokes *לשם שמים*, and they claim that they are fighting for Hashem's honor, but really, it would be better if they would have avoided the machlokes. Therefore, we need *החדשים*, a new heaven. The old shamayim was used for machlokes.

Measuring the Years of Life

Pharaoh asked Yaakov how old he was, and he replied (47:9) *ימי שני מגורי שלשים ומאת שנה*, "The days of the years of my sojourning are one hundred thirty years.

The days of the years of my life have been few and miserable."

The Malbim explains that Yaakov told Pharaoh that the years of one's life can be divided into two categories. One category is the number of years that one actually lived. About those years, Yaakov said that he lived 130 years. He called those years *שני מגורי*, the years he lived on earth, but they weren't *שני חי*, the years of his life, which are the years which in them he served Hashem. About *שנות חי*, the true years of one's life, Yaakov humbly said that they were *מעט*, few years, *ורעים*, because he didn't consider them as good as the years of his parents, as he said, *ולא השיגו את ימי שני חי אבתי*.

The Malbim elaborates, "The years of one's life should only be counted as the years that he served Hashem. Those are the years of his life. But the years that he lived like an animal aren't counted among the years of his life. His body lived, but his mind and soul, which are unique to human life, were dead. These years are called *שני מגורי* but they aren't called *שנות חי*."

"Pharaoh considered all a person's life to be years, and Yaakov replied that Pharaoh didn't resent the question accurately. If you ask me about my age, I am 130. But if you want to know how many years I have been alive, they were few and bad years. My spiritual life, which are the true years of a person's life, and those years don't compare to the years that my parents received. They had many more years because they served Hashem and attained spiritual greatness.⁶

6. The father of Reb Meir Premishlaner zt'l saw a heavenly vision in a dream. He saw heaven calling young people "old" and old people "young," and he asked them why. Heaven explained, "Here we view people according to how long they serve Hashem. We don't look at the age they lived; rather, we measure them according to the amount of time they served Hashem. Some young people are cautious with their time, and in the few years of their life, they spend more time in Hashem's service than elderly people. So, we call them old. Whereas, the old people who hardly spent time serving Hashem, we call them young."

A similar story is told about a person who came to a graveyard, and he read on one grave, "Here lies a person who was niftar at the age two." Another grave says, "Here lies the rav who was niftar at seven years." There wasn't anyone in the graveyard who had lived more than ten years. He asked, "What happened in this city? Was there an epidemic, and everyone died young?"

Many people live a life without a purpose. They eat to be able to work and work to be able to eat. It is a cycle that doesn't go anywhere. But the Jewish nation works so they can earn money to serve Hashem.

It states (45:27) ... וירא את העגלות אשר שלח יוסף... ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם (עגלות) that Yosef sent, and this lifted his spirits.

The Chasam Sofer explains that when Yosef sent the עגלות, which also means wheels, Yaakov understood that Yosef was expressing to him the foolishness of this world, how people live a life that goes around in circles, working to eat and eating to work. This lifted Yaakov's spirits because he understood that even after living many years in Mitzrayim, his son, Yosef, perceives the truth of life.⁷

Most people didn't know the answer, but after asking around enough, he found an old person who supplied the explanation. "In this city, they didn't write the number of years one lived. They wrote on the tombstone the number of years he served Hashem because only those are considered years of life. Some lived until eighty years or more, but on the tombstone, they wrote that he lived a few years because that was how long they served Hashem."

7. The hint is from the pasuk ויהי מקץ שנתיים ימים.

Sometimes, from שנתיים years of life, all that was used was ימים, a few days' worth of time in Hashem's service.

